

THE INFLUENCE OF BRAND AMBASSADOR, ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH, AND SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON PURCHASING INTENTION BRAND TRUST AS MEDIATOR ON COSMETIC PRODUCTS

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Abstract.

This study examines the effects of brand ambassadors, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), and social media marketing on purchase intention, with brand trust as a mediating variable. In the context of Indonesia's cosmetics industry, particularly for the Luxcrime brand, this research adopts the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as a framework to understand how these factors impact consumer buying behavior. Utilizing a quantitative approach and structural equation modeling (SEM) with a sample of Luxcrime consumers, the findings reveal that social media marketing and e-WOM significantly enhance both brand trust and purchase intention, while brand ambassadors directly influence purchase intention without significantly impacting brand trust. The study contributes to the marketing literature by underscoring the importance of brand trust in mediating digital marketing strategies, offering actionable insights for brands aiming to foster consumer engagement and loyalty.

Keywords: Brand ambassador, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), social media marketing, structural equation modeling (SEM), cosmetics industry

INTRODUCTION

In an era of rapid technological advancement, consumer demands are diversifying beyond basic needs. For many women, physical aesthetics and self-care have become integral to the modern lifestyle. The surge in demand for skincare products is fueled not only by a desire for enhanced appearance but also by an increased awareness of the importance of maintaining overall skin health (Asia et al., 2022). This shift positions skincare as a dual-purpose product, serving both cosmetic and essential self-care functions.

The Indonesian cosmetics industry has experienced significant growth, with the number of companies in this sector expanding by over 21.9% in a single year. Indonesian cosmetic products have also seen substantial export success, reaching USD 770.8 million in 2023 (Inang Sh, 2024). As the industry

grows, local brands have become more competitive, drawing consumer attention by offering high-quality products at more affordable prices than many imports (Salsabila & Wardhana, 2023).

The success of local brands like Wardah, Make Over, and Luxcrime signifies this transformation in consumer values, with Indonesian-made cosmetics gaining popularity for their positive economic and cultural contributions (Taylor, 2012). Luxcrime, for instance, has solidified its position with a unique tagline, “I, Makeup, Skin, Happy,” and a strategic marketing approach, including influential brand ambassadors like Yuki Kato. When aligned with brand values, brand ambassadors play a crucial role in enhancing brand credibility, creating emotional connections with consumers, and reinforcing brand recall and loyalty (Jun & Yi, 2020).

In today’s interconnected world, brand ambassadors resonate with consumers by reflecting their values and lifestyles, strengthening brand connections and influencing purchasing intentions (Tran et al., 2019). This effect is especially strong in an era where digital interactions shape consumer decisions and peer endorsements hold significant weight. A well-aligned brand ambassador not only promotes products but also serves as a trusted bridge between the brand and its audience, enhancing consumer trust and deepening the emotional experience tied to the brand (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019).

Furthermore, effective brand ambassadors contribute to long-term brand equity by encouraging consumer loyalty and brand advocacy. A relatable ambassador can transform one-time buyers into loyal customers, creating a community-like atmosphere around the brand. Research shows that consumers who feel an affinity with a brand ambassador tend to trust the brand more, resulting in positive perceptions of product quality and increased brand recommendations (Macheka et al., 2024). The lasting impact of brand ambassadors thus supports a holistic marketing strategy that drives sustained growth in brand preference and purchasing intent.

As social media has solidified its role as a primary engagement platform, strategies such as Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) have become indispensable for enhancing consumers' purchasing intentions. The information shared within these digital spaces often carries a heightened sense of credibility, especially when it comes from trusted influencers and brand ambassadors (Reza Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). Research indicates that the reliability of messages communicated by these public figures not only amplifies consumers' emotional engagement but also fortifies brand trust, which in turn significantly influences their likelihood to make a purchase (Fulmer, 2018).

This reliance on trusted endorsements illustrates a profound shift in consumer behavior, where recommendations from familiar faces resonate more powerfully than traditional advertising methods. In this context, E-WOM serves as a powerful tool for brands, creating a ripple effect that can substantially

increase visibility and desirability among target audiences. As consumers increasingly seek authentic connections and genuine recommendations, leveraging E-WOM through strategic influencer partnerships can be a game-changer for brands looking to enhance their market presence and drive sales.

In recent years, social media marketing has emerged as a pivotal force in shaping consumer buying behavior, fundamentally transforming how brands engage with their audiences. This digital landscape drives engagement, enhances brand awareness, and cultivates brand trust among consumers (Park et al., 2021). Social media is not merely an auxiliary tool; it has become the cornerstone of modern business marketing strategies, necessitating a high level of organizational commitment to ensure that consumers receive a cohesive and seamless experience across all touchpoints (Evans & Mckee, 2010).

The interactive nature of social media platforms allows brands to engage consumers directly, fostering positive brand associations that significantly enhance consumers' willingness to purchase. This engagement transcends traditional marketing approaches, creating a dynamic relationship where consumer feedback can influence brand strategies and product development in real time. By cultivating an authentic online presence, brands can leverage social media to create a loyal customer base that feels connected and invested in the brand's narrative.

Furthermore, the shift towards digital interactions highlights the necessity for brands to understand and adapt to the evolving consumer landscape. As consumers increasingly rely on social media for information and recommendations, brands that effectively harness these platforms are better positioned to build trust and credibility, ultimately driving sales and fostering long-term loyalty.

Brand trust plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between digital marketing strategies and consumer purchase intentions. Research highlights that brand trust embodies consumer confidence in the consistent quality and reliability of a brand's products (Valette-Florence & Valette-Florence, 2020). This construct encompasses a complex web of relationships among individuals, groups, and organizations, illustrating how interconnected perceptions can shape consumer behavior (Fulmer, 2018).

Crucially, brand trust serves as a mediating force that enhances the effectiveness of brand ambassadors, Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), and social media marketing in influencing purchase intentions. By reinforcing a brand's credibility and emotional resonance with consumers, brand trust strengthens its impact on consumer decision-making processes (Hasan & Elviana, 2022; Mahmud et al., 2024). As consumers increasingly rely on social proof and trusted endorsements, cultivating brand trust becomes essential for brands aiming to foster loyalty and drive sustainable growth in an ever-competitive marketplace.

Existing studies are limited in empirically confirming whether brand trust fully mediates the interactions between brand ambassadors, E-WOM, social media marketing, and consumer purchase intentions (Hanaysha, 2022). This lack of detailed exploration highlights the need for further research to clarify these relationships. Accordingly, this study aims to address this gap by analyzing the interplay between these variables using structural equation modeling (SEM) with SMART PLS, advancing the understanding of brand trust's mediating role in contemporary digital marketing.

In today's digital era, consumers rely heavily on social media and online recommendations before making a purchase. Understanding how e-WOM and social media marketing affect trust and intention can help brands develop better strategies. Many studies focus only on direct influences, but this research examines how brand trust bridges the gap between marketing efforts and consumer intention, offering deeper insights into consumer decision-making. The beauty and cosmetic market is highly competitive, making it crucial for brands to leverage influencers, online reviews, and digital strategies to stay relevant. This is the background why this research is important, and writer make research for "The Influence of Brand Ambassador, Electronic Word of Mouth, and Social Media Marketing on Purchasing Intention Brand Trust as Mediator on Cosmetic Products."

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a positivist paradigm with a quantitative approach. Quantitative research is a systematic investigation that focuses on collecting and analyzing numerical data to understand patterns, relationships, and trends. It is commonly used in social sciences, business, and marketing to test hypotheses and make data-driven decisions. Quantitative is to evaluate the effects of brand ambassador influence, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), and social media marketing on Luxcrime consumers' purchase intentions in Indonesia. Brand trust is analyzed as a mediating factor to enhance understanding of these relationships, with the Theory of Planned Behavior as a guiding framework.

An explanatory research design was chosen to uncover the causal links between the independent variables (brand ambassador, eWOM, and social media marketing) and the dependent variable (purchase intention), with brand trust as a mediator. This design effectively sheds light on the marketing factors influencing consumer behavior and purchase decisions.

Data collection involved a structured online survey distributed to Luxcrime consumers across Indonesia via Google Forms, capturing their perceptions of brand ambassadors, eWOM, social media marketing, brand trust, and purchase intention. The target population includes Luxcrime consumers in

Indonesia, though the specific size remains unknown. Therefore, purposive sampling was applied, selecting respondents who had previously purchased Luxcrime products to maintain data relevance. Based on Cochran’s formula for unknown populations, a sample size of 384 respondents was set, providing a robust basis for statistical analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

RESEARCH RESULTS

Measurement Model Analysis

The measurement model (outer model) assessment for convergent validity evaluates how effectively a construct represents the variability of the indicators in a given measurement. According to Hair et al. (2019), an indicator is considered valid within the model if it has a loading factor greater than 0.7. Indicators that do not meet this criterion are removed from the model. All retained indicators meet the standard criteria set by Hair et al. (2019), with Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above 0.5, indicating strong construct validity.

Discriminant validity is also examined, ensuring that each construct within the study has unique characteristics that do not overlap with other constructs. This is achieved by verifying that the AVE value for each latent variable is greater than the squared correlation with all other latent variables in the model (Henseler et al., 2015). Reliability testing is equally important in Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis to assess the consistency of the measurement tool. Reliability is evaluated through composite reliability, with constructs deemed reliable if Cronbach's alpha exceeds 0.60.

Table 1. Measurement Model Result

Variable	Code	Measurement Item	Loading Factor	AVE	Reliability
Brand Ambassador (X1)	X11	Yuki Kato memiliki pengetahuan yang luas tentang produk kosmetik dan skincare, sehingga menjadi sumber informasi yang dapat diandalkan.	0.784	0.612	0.873
	X12	Informasi yang diberikan oleh Yuki Kato mengenai produk Luxcrime dapat dipercaya sehingga anda memutuskan untuk membeli	0.838		
	X13	Pesan yang diberikan oleh Yuki Kato mengenai brand	0.780		

Variable	Code	Measurement Item	Loading Factor	AVE	Reliability
		dan produk Luxcrime mudah dipahami sehingga anda yakin untuk membeli produk Luxcrime.			
	X14	Yuki Kato dikenal luas di industri kecantikan dan diakui di berbagai platform media sosial	0.737		
	X16	Saya tertarik membeli produk Luxcrime karna melihat postingan yuki kato memakai produk Luxcrime	0.806		
	X17	Saya membeli produk Luxcrime karena Yuki Kato merupakan Brand Ambasadornya	0.745		
Electronic Word of Mouth (X2)	X23	Informasi yang saya dapatkan tentang produk Luxcrime relevan dengan kebutuhan saya	0.687	0.665	0.875
	X24	Informasi yang saya dapatkan tentang produk Luxcrime sesuai dengan pengalaman pribadi saya selama memakai Luxcrime	0.779		
	X25	Pengaruh teman/ saudara / keluarga/ internet sangat tinggi untuk saya membeli produk Luxcrime	0.788		
	X26	Interaksi dua arah sangat mungkin terjadi dalam berbagi informasi tentang kosmetik.	0.822		
	X27	Informasi yang diperoleh adalah informasi terbaru mengenai tren dan produk kosmetik.	0.812		
	X28	Saya sering kali menerima informasi tentang produk Luxcrime dari berbagai	0.809		

Variable	Code	Measurement Item	Loading Factor	AVE	Reliability
		platform dan mempengaruhi saya dalam niat beli			
Social Media Marketing (X3)	X31	Saya percaya bahwa mereka memiliki alasan yang kredibel dan akurat dalam mendukung opini mereka tentang produk kosmetik.	0.819	0.615	0.853
	X32	Saya menemukan bahwa ulasan mereka objektif dan meyakinkan.	0.809		
	X33	Saya menghargai bahwa informasi yang mereka berikan umumnya berguna dan informatif.	0.832		
	X34	Saya sering membaca atau menonton ulasan sebelum membeli produk kosmetik, karena saya menghargai pengalaman pengguna lain.	0.794		
	X36	Saya berupaya aktif dalam mencari dan mengumpulkan informasi tentang berbagai produk kosmetik untuk meningkatkan pengetahuan.	0.714		
Brand Trust (Z1)	Z11	Saya cenderung membeli produk makeup yang direkomendasikan oleh influencer kecantikan favorit saya.	0.853	0.625	0.872
	Z12	Keinginan saya untuk membeli produk makeup yang direkomendasikan oleh influencer kecantikan favorit saya sangat tinggi.	0.860		
	Z13	Produk makeup yang direkomendasikan oleh influencer kecantikan favorit saya memengaruhi niat saya untuk membeli.	0.868		

Variable	Code	Measurement Item	Loading Factor	AVE	Reliability
	Z14	Saat membeli produk, ulasan positif atau negatif secara online memengaruhi keputusan pembelian saya.	0.764		
	Z15	Setelah membeli dan menggunakan produk, saya juga akan meninggalkan ulasan/masukan saya secara online agar calon pembeli dapat mengetahui kualitas produk.	0.721		
Purchase Intention (Y1)	Y11	Saya yakin dan merasa tenang dengan pilihan kosmetik dari merek tertentu yang saya gunakan.	0.805	0.631	0.800
	Y12	Kosmetik dari merek ini memberikan kejujuran dalam kualitas dan klaim yang diusung.	0.767		
	Y13	Produk kosmetik yang saya pilih terjamin keamanannya dan aman digunakan.	0.825		
	Y14	Saat berbelanja kosmetik, ulasan dari pengguna di media sosial atau situs web membuat saya semakin percaya diri untuk melakukan pembelian.	0.763		

The measurement model was evaluated to assess the constructs' validity and reliability, ensuring that the indicators accurately represent the underlying latent variables. The indicators with loading factors below this threshold were eliminated in the preliminary phase of testing to enhance the model's validity. As summarized in Table 1, all retained indicators surpassed the minimum loading factor requirement, confirming their significant contributions to their respective constructs.

Additionally, the AVE for each construct was calculated. The analysis revealed that all constructs achieved AVE values exceeding this threshold, demonstrating good convergent validity. The AVE values for each construct were as follows: Brand Ambassador (0.612), Electronic Word of Mouth

(0.665), Social Media Marketing (0.615), Brand Trust (0.625), and Purchase Intention (0.631).

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha to ensure internal consistency. The results indicated that all constructs met these reliability criteria, with Cronbach’s alpha values ranging from 0.800 to 0.875, thus affirming the consistency of the measurement instruments employed in this study.

Structural Model Analysis

Once all measurement models have been verified as valid and reliable, the subsequent step involves analyzing the structural or inner model. The first step in this process is the calculation of the R-square (R^2) value, a critical metric in regression models that quantifies the extent to which variance in the endogenous variable is explained by the exogenous variables, known as the coefficient of determination. According to Hair et al. (2019), R^2 values range from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating a stronger explanatory power of the model in capturing the variance of the dependent variable. In addition to R^2 , predictive relevance (Q^2) is also assessed using the blindfolding technique. This metric evaluates the model’s capacity for accurate prediction of endogenous constructs. A Q^2 value greater than 0 indicates predictive relevance, with higher values suggesting stronger predictive ability (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 2. Structural Model Result

Variable	Code	Q^2 predict	R-Square
Brand Trust (Z1)	Z11	0.369	0.604
	Z12	0.376	
	Z13	0.389	
	Z14	0.423	
	Z15	0.371	
Purchase Intention (Y1)	Y11	0.451	0.770
	Y12	0.306	
	Y13	0.586	
	Y14	0.458	

For Brand Trust (Z1), the R^2 value of 0.604 indicates that 60.4% of its variance is explained by brand ambassador influence, eWOM, and social media marketing, demonstrating substantial explanatory power in predicting brand trust. Purchase Intention (Y1) shows an R^2 of 0.770, suggesting that 77% of its

variance is accounted for by brand trust and related variables, emphasizing a strong influence of brand trust on purchase intention.

Regarding predictive relevance (Q^2), Brand Trust (Z1) has Q^2 values between 0.369 and 0.423, with the highest at 0.423, highlighting reliable predictive accuracy. For Purchase Intention (Y1), Q^2 values range from 0.306 to 0.586, with the strongest prediction accuracy in Y13 ($Q^2 = 0.586$), confirming the model's efficacy in predicting consumer purchase intention across the relevant constructs.

Hypotheses Testing

After the analysis of the structural model, hypothesis testing is carried out to assess the statistical significance as well as the strength of the direct and indirect relationships between the variables in the model. The direct effect path coefficient test measures how much the influence of independent variables on dependent variables in the PLS-SEM framework. The path coefficient indicates the direction of the relationship: a positive value indicates a direct influence, while a negative value indicates an inverse effect. The relationship is considered statistically significant when the t-statistic is >1.96 and the p-value is <0.05 (Abdillah & Hartono, 2015; Sarstedt et al., 2017). Conversely, a p-value of >0.05 indicates that there is not enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis, so the relationship is considered insignificant. This criterion helps explain the pathways of influence in the model.

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing of Direct Effect

Hypotheses	T statistics	P values	Result
Brand Ambassador -> Brand Trust	0.459	0.646	Rejected
Social Media Marketing -> Purchase Intention	3.316	0.001	Accepted
Brand Ambassador -> Purchase Intention	3.999	0.000	Accepted
Social Media Marketing -> Brand Trust	5.234	0.000	Accepted
Brand Trust -> Purchase Intention	6.973	0.000	Accepted
E-WOM -> Brand Trust	7.179	0.000	Accepted
E-WOM -> Purchase Intention	10.101	0.000	Accepted

The results of the hypotheses testing provide valuable insights into the relationships among brand ambassador influence, social media marketing, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), brand trust, and purchase intention. The findings reveal several statistically significant relationships, along with one

non-significant path. First, the influence of brand ambassadors on brand trust was found to be non-significant ($T = 0.459$, $p = 0.646$), suggesting that, in this context, brand ambassadors alone may not sufficiently contribute to building trust. This indicates that other factors might play a more critical role in fostering brand trust.

In contrast, social media marketing positively influences purchase intention, with significant results ($T = 3.316$, $p = 0.001$), indicating that effective social media strategies can substantially drive consumer buying intentions. Similarly, the brand ambassador's impact on purchase intention was confirmed ($T = 3.999$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that trusted endorsements can directly encourage consumers to make purchase decisions, thus enhancing brand appeal.

Furthermore, social media marketing has a significant positive effect on brand trust ($T = 5.234$, $p = 0.000$), showing that consistent, engaging social media content can foster consumer trust in a brand. Brand trust itself also emerged as a strong predictor of purchase intention ($T = 6.973$, $p = 0.000$), highlighting its central role as a mediator in the purchasing process. Additionally, eWOM has significant positive effects on both brand trust ($T = 7.179$, $p = 0.000$) and purchase intention ($T = 10.101$, $p = 0.000$), underlining the power of peer recommendations in influencing consumer perceptions and purchase behaviors.

In summary, the results underscore the importance of social media marketing, eWOM, and brand ambassadors in shaping purchase intention, with brand trust serving as a crucial mediator in the process. However, the lack of a significant relationship between brand ambassadors and brand trust suggests that trust-building may require more than endorsements alone. This analysis offers strategic guidance for brands aiming to strengthen their consumer engagement and influence purchase behavior effectively.

Following the direct effect analysis, the next step is to examine the indirect path coefficients or conduct a mediation test. This stage aims to assess whether brand trust acts as a mediating variable, transmitting the effect of other independent variables, such as brand ambassador influence, social media marketing, and eWOM, on purchase intention. To conduct the mediation test in SmartPLS, the indirect path coefficient is evaluated, using the bootstrapping method to ensure the statistical significance of the indirect relationships. In this test, if both the direct path (independent to dependent) and indirect path (independent to mediator to dependent) are significant, it indicates partial mediation. Conversely, if the direct path loses significance while the indirect path remains significant, full mediation is confirmed. For significance, the T-statistics should exceed 1.96, and p-values should be less than 0.05 (Abdillah & Hartono, 2015; Sarstedt et al., 2017).

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing of Indirect Effect

Hypotheses	T Statistics	P values
Brand Ambassador -> Brand Trust -> Purchase Intention	0.466	0.641
E-WOM -> Brand Trust -> Purchase Intention	4.338	0.000
Social Media Mkt -> Brand Trust -> Purchase Intention	4.586	0.000

The mediation analysis reveals varied influences on purchase intention through brand trust. The indirect path from Brand Ambassador to Brand Trust to Purchase Intention was not statistically significant, with a T-statistic of 0.466 and a p-value of 0.641, indicating that brand trust does not mediate this relationship. In contrast, both the paths from eWOM to Brand Trust to Purchase Intention and Social Media Marketing to Brand Trust to Purchase Intention were statistically significant, with T-statistics of 4.338 and 4.586 and p-values of 0.000. This indicates that brand trust effectively mediates the impact of eWOM and social media marketing on purchase intention. Overall, while brand ambassadors do not influence purchase intention through brand trust, eWOM and social media marketing significantly enhance purchase intention via brand trust).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This research presents a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing purchase intention, specifically within the context of the beauty industry. The study's findings affirm that brand trust plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer purchase decisions, functioning as a mediator between social media marketing, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), and purchase intention. The results underscore the substantial impact of social media marketing and eWOM on both brand trust and purchase intention, highlighting their importance as strategic tools for brands seeking to enhance consumer engagement.

Importantly, this research fills a significant gap in the existing literature, as it uniquely combines these constructs within a single model, which has not been previously explored. The results indicate that while brand ambassadors can influence purchase intention directly, they do not significantly contribute to building brand trust on their own. This suggests that brands must adopt a multifaceted approach, integrating effective social media strategies and leveraging the power of eWOM to foster consumer trust and drive purchasing behavior. The implications of this study extend to marketing practitioners, who can derive actionable insights to optimize their branding strategies. By prioritizing authentic engagement and leveraging social media content that

resonates with their target audience, brands can enhance trust and, consequently, purchasing intentions. As the beauty industry continues to evolve in the digital age, understanding these dynamics will be crucial for brands aiming to maintain a competitive edge and cultivate long-term customer loyalty.

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